



History of Cedars of Lebanon State Park

Cedars of Lebanon State Park and State Forest are located in the southwestern part of Wilson County within the Central Basin of Tennessee. During the early 1800's, many of the original settlers gained land ownership through land grants for their service during the Revolutionary War. They found the area to be a vast cedar forest. This forest (although it actually consists of juniper trees mistaken for cedars by the first arrivals) suggested to these pioneers the biblical name of the "place of Cedars". Lebanon is the closest town and was named by these early settlers due to this association.

From the early days of settlement to the early 1900's the juniper trees were cleared for road boarding, telegraph poles, furniture, fence rails, pencils and even a market for stumps developed. By the 1930's the land in what is now Cedars of Lebanon had divided into approximately 60 small farms, most of which were barely getting by. The

thin soil and limestone rock which composes the top layers of the Central Basin of Tennessee as well as poor farming tactics lead to erosion and soil depletion. These factors, along with the clearing of the juniper trees stacked the cards against the farmers of the 1930's. The federal government then stepped in during the depression years and changed many of the small farmers' lives by purchasing their land and thereby enabling them to relocate and start anew.

Cedars of Lebanon State Park and State Forest then began as a reclamation project jointly managed by the United States Forestry Service, the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) and the Resettlement Administration. Forest management and a recreational program were put in place. In 1955 the federal government deeded the project to the state of Tennessee. Today the Department of Environment and Conservation manages the 900 acres of the State Park while the Department of Agriculture manages the 8,100 acre State Forest.

The terrain of the State Park and Forest is classified as Karst topography, which is characterized by sinkholes, springs, caves, disappearing springs and underground drainage . Jackson Cave is located in the center of the park and is a typical representative of this feature. No surface water exists here due to this Karst topography.

The sections of the park built by the W.P.A. have

recently received national recognition when they were added to the National Register of Historical Places. Also, a section of the State Forest with its cedar glades has been designated as a federally protected natural area.

Today the state of Tennessee continues to juggle management of the park and forest. It strives to reach a compromise between the demand for recreation and the need for protection of its historical and natural features for future generations of Tennesseans and its visitors.